



Exchange Report: Fall 2017-18

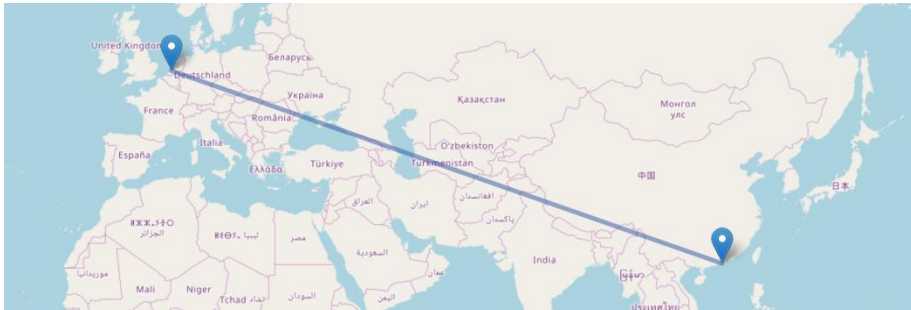
Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University

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"A unique experience of studying & exploring. From adapting to an interactive teaching method, to travelling across 30 countries in Europe, these 4 months is a life-long memory."

INTRODUCTION

Located in the South Holland province, Erasmus University Rotterdam is at the Western part of the Netherlands. It is the second largest city (second to Amsterdam), and is regarded as one of the most creative cities in the country.



“Rotterdam: Inspiring & Innovative” -Lonely Planet

AUGUST

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My exciting journey started off on the 29th of August, after finishing my summer internship, farewells with my best friends, and a nice meal with my parents.

Kudos to HKUST, I enjoyed a discounted direct flight operated by Cathay Pacific to Amsterdam! I was brought safe and sound into the country of tulips (which only opens between March and May

😊) and windmills in roughly 11 hours. In coincidence, I met 7 other HKUST students going to Maastricht University on the same flight! It was truly a remarkable day to me.



Upon arrival and farewell to the friends going to Maastricht, I took on the intercity direct train from Amsterdam Schiphol Airport to Rotterdam Centraal. The trip was short, lasting just 30 minutes. I then took the tram directly to the school. The resident hall representative was already here waiting for me!!

I spent the rest of the week settling down and adapting to the new environment.

SEPTEMBER

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Class does not start until the second week of September, so I had more than enough time to adapt and plan my 4 months of exchange. Each year, the Erasmus University welcomes students back to school with a series of events, including a welcoming day for all students, an exchange student specific orientation (€80), celebration festival called "heart beat festival" held on campus and many more.



Orientation at Hoek van Holland

I took 3 courses: Organisation Theory & Dynamics (6 ECTS), Cultural influences on communication (5 ECTS), and a minor on Money & Banking (15 ECTS). Organisation Theory & Dynamics class is lecture based (~400 students), while the two other classes are held in the format of a small class (~30 students).

Business related courses are under Rotterdam School of Management (RSM), while the cultural course belongs to Erasmus School of Culture and Communication (ESHCC).

Compared to HKUST, classes, no matter of its size, are more flexible, interactive and adaptable at EUR. There is only one lesson, ranging from 1 hour and 50 minutes to 3 hours, per class per week. Lecturers usually prompt students to participate in class through asking questions about their daily lives, and by case studies on the theories that had been taught. The professor of the minor on Money and Banking even consulted students on their interested topics so he can focus on those areas during class time. Students are expected to self-study untaught topics outside class. This is a whole new experience to me and I found the learning curve grows much steeper than that of HKUST.

Outside class, I met friends from Hong Kong who are also on their exchange in Rotterdam. There were 20 of them. We had our own welcoming dinner at a nice pizza place!



Friends of Hong Kong

I also went on travel in and out of the Netherlands, which is part of exchange! In September, I went to:

- **Den Haag, Delft & Utrecht (Netherlands):**
Den Haag is in the same province as Rotterdam, and can be reached by Metro Line E or Train in half an hour! It is the diplomatic place of the Netherlands. / Delft is famous for Chinese blue pottery. / Utrecht is the home of Miffy!
- **Brussels, Bruges & Atomium (Belgium):**
Belgium is the capital of chocolate and waffles! / Bruges has its unique historical city landscape.
- **Luzerne, Zurich & the Rhinefalls (Switzerland):**
Luzerne is famous for its beautiful landscape next to the waters / Zurich is the home of businesses in Swiss and is one of the highest priced places in Europe / Rhinefalls is the end of River Rhine, and the waterfall is stunning beautiful.



Brussels, Belgium

OCTOBER

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October is the real start of courses and midterms. I have projects, assignments and one midterm.

Studying abroad allows me to group with people of different variety, such as local Dutch. They are more hardworking than I thought they would be, and we turned out to cooperate pretty well. The only glitch is they don't often use google drive, and I have to suggest the use of it to enhance our work efficiency.

The midterm for cultural communication did not go on too well. Although I studied hard, I only got a 6.5 out of 10 (though it is still more than pass). I eventually found out that the way of writing essay is different here than the usual way we do in Hong Kong, which I have to adapt.

During weekends, I took trips to:

- **Roermond, Eindhoven & Almere (Netherlands):**
Roermond owns the largest shopping outlet in the Netherlands, where you can get fair discounts for branded goods. / Eindhoven is a major industrial city. / Almere is the place where the annual BWF Dutch Open is held.
- **Ljubljana & Lake Bled (Slovenia):**
Ljubljana is the beautiful Slovenian capital with nice castle and city center. / Lake Bled is a gem of Slovenia and photos of the swans swimming brings memorable moments.
- **Zagreb & the Plitvice lakes (Croatia):**

Zagreb is the Croatian capital with affordable prices / Coming to Croatia without going to Plitvice Lakes is a sin. World famous country park.

- **Berlin (Germany):**
Dive into the historical capital of Berlin, where you understand the history which influenced the world.
- **Rome, Vatican, Florence & Venice (Italy / Vatican):**
Rome is the Italian capital with vibrant city center. / Vatican is a religion based country inside Rome and very much of it is the amazing Vatican museum. / Florence is the livable and cultural city in Italy. / Venice is the tourist island with unlimited shopping alleys and surrounded by waters.
- **Vienna & Hallstatt (Austria):**
Vienna is the city of music and the concert there is a must. / Hallstatt is the recently famous small town near Salzburg which has amazing views of a lake and houses.



Hallstatt, Austria

NOVEMBER

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November is the end of courses and exam time for 2 of my 3 courses. As each collage has a different schedule, you will have different class and exam time depending on courses you choose. Courses usually end in early November, with exams in mid-November or early December.

I studied hard and finished all the projects and assignments in early November, took my exams on Money and Banking and Cultural Influences on Communication. They were not very hard surprisingly, and I went travel happily after the 2 exams as the last exam I have is one month away.

These are the places I went to in November:

- **Baltics: Tallinn (Estonia), Riga (Latvia), Vilnius (Lithuania)**
The Baltic region is increasingly popular among tourists. With the Soviet history and Nordic traditions, the Old Towns are surprisingly interesting for people who like colorful buildings and traditional food.
- **The Northwest: Dublin (Ireland) & Belfast (N. Ireland / UK)**
UK is popular for a lot of tourists, but Ireland (an independent country), and Northern Ireland (part of the UK) are less heard of. Together on an island Northwest of Europe, it is a place with nice views, interesting culture and town life. An Irish breakfast cannot be missed.
- **The West: Lisbon (Portugal) & Madrid (Spain)**

Lisbon is the capital with the most sunshine in Europe. Out of 365 days, there are sunshine for 320 days in Lisbon. Pastries are the best in Portugal and Spain, a must try when you visit these two countries.

- **The East: Warsaw (Poland), Prague (Czech), Bratislava (Slovakia), Budapest (Hungary), Belgrade (Serbia), Skopje (Macedonia), Sofia (Bulgaria)**



Lisbon, Portugal



Vilnius, Lithuania

DECEMBER

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December is a month of exam, farewell and much more studying.

Before I took my exam on 11th of December, I travelled to Manchester for a football match, which is a must if you are in Europe. The atmosphere was awesome. I then went to visit my friend in Cardiff, Wales before spending 3 days to revise for my finals.

The finals for Organisation Theory and Dynamics was MC based and accounts only 50% (the rest is project and assignment). It is

not hard and I passed even I did not revise thoroughly (largely due to the huge amount of content).

I then went to Northern Europe to visit my friend, before saying farewell to all my friends in Rotterdam 😞. I had memorable moments at the badminton club, case society and the accommodation building at the University.

Spending Christmas, my birthday and the new year celebrations at the UK and Iceland, I think it is the best ending to my exchange journey.

Places I went in December:

- **Amsterdam, Leiden & Maastricht (Netherlands)**
- **The Nordics: Copenhagen (Denmark), Helsinki (Finland), Stockholm (Sweden), Oslo (Norway) & Reykjavik and surroundings (Iceland)**
- **Manchester, London, Essex & Cardiff (England & Wales / UK)**



Copenhagen, Denmark



Oslo, Norway



Old Trafford

VISA PROCEDURES

Visa is a hassle, especially when you do not hold a EU passport. EUR will email you a list of procedures you have to fulfill, including transfer a non-refundable 316 EUR (2853 HKD) into their bank account. After the visa application is successful, you have to sign up for a timeslot at the Dutch embassy in Wan Chai as soon as possible for a visa to be stuck on passport. Please note the procedure takes 1 to 2 weeks, and time slots are limited due to the very short working hours of the embassy.

After you arrive Rotterdam, you should collect your residence permit (your ID) at the center near Rotterdam Centraal, and register at the town hall if necessary (stay over 4 months).

ORIENTATION

Orientation is mandatory. It is a one day event held at the beginning of September. We had briefings on necessary information, campus hunt, and games and dinner at the beach at Hoek van Holland. You can also chat with the RSM staff, who are very helpful and kind. The events were fun, though the Dutch weather (rain & wind) messed it all up.

A fee of 80 EUR (720 HKD) had to be paid. Such a rip-off considering that you can go for a trip in Belgium for only 29 EUR.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

ESN is an international organization which holds events from time to time. Despite the fact that the events are generally drinking event which I won't join, the ESN card (10 EUR) is very useful as you get 15% off + free luggage check in for Ryanair.

ACTIVITIES

Club & Societies

I joined the RSM Case Society, which alike HKUST Case Analysis team, trains students on case analyzing and send them out for case competition. I learnt quite a lot and people were very nice to me. It is such a pity that I cannot stay longer.

Recruiting Events

Societies and RSM organizes recruiting events frequently. From company events to recruitment days, there are a lot of opportunities for students. For instance, I joined an event where Microsoft had a case analysis with us, and shared about their graduate program.

Please be aware that these events may be Dutch speaking, and they sometimes do not accept exchange students. They are good for making connections though.

ACCOMODATION

There are a few times of accommodation available for choice: 1) F building 2) Hatta 3) Others. Hatta and F building are both on campus, priced at 530 EUR per month, while other housing

choices can be found online or Facebook groups. Prices can range from 400 EUR to 900 EUR or more. **On campus housing is very limited and will be sold out within 2 days after system opens.**

I chose F building due to its individual room and free washing machine service. Yet, the building itself is very old and is about to demolish. There are also insects and smell in the corridor, which is awful. The only good thing is it is quiet and good for rest. Bedding equipment costs extra 50 EUR, and kitchen equipment such as pan costs 80 EUR extra, which is also a rip off. I bought a pillow and pan myself, which costed only some 15 EUR.

Hatta is new and much nicer. It has a common area for every 3 rooms, a better view, and better security. The only downside is that washing cost 2 EUR each time and drying costs extra.

Other housing options such as student hotel or renting your own housing is not recommended as housing is tight in Rotterdam and prices are usually high. You also have to find housemates to rent an apartment together. They usually take 15 to 30 minutes to walk or bike to school.

COURSES & TEACHING

BKBMIN044 Money & Banking (Minor) 15 ECTS

- For ECON4334 Money & Banking (4 credits)

CM9003 Cultural Influences on Communication 5 ECTS

- For HUMA CC (3 credits)

BAB21 Organizational Theory & Dynamics 6 ECTS

- For MGMT 3130: Judgement and Decision Making in Organizations

Teaching is very interactive even in a 400 people lecture. Lecturers ask and chat with students much more than they do at HKUST. They also sound less odd in class as they prepare well (unlike some HKUST professors). In general, teaching content is integrated into daily lives, and are usually case based. You can easily apply what you learnt into your daily lives.

SPORTS & RECREATION

I play badminton, and I joined the BV Erasmus during the semester. In the Netherlands, each city has their own badminton team which they also compete against each other. They play at the University's sports hall every Tuesday and Friday night. Very nice people 😊

What I would like to remind everyone is the high sports hall prices. It costs 70 EUR (some 120 EUR for spring) to buy a semester pass into the sports hall and gym, which is such a rip off again.

SAFETY

The Netherlands in general is a very safe country. Apart from Amsterdam which you might have a few thefts due to the tourists, be rest assured that you will be all fine.

I did not encounter any theft during my visit. Yet, to ensure your safety, **be cautious at all times** and buy insurance if needed.

FOOD

I have no idea why the Netherlands has such high food prices. Eating out costs around 10 to 15 EUR (90-135 HKD) per meal. Thus, I usually cook on my own and get food from a nearby supermarket (PLUS – 10 minutes away).

For information, a McDonalds meal costs 6 to 7 EUR (54-63 HKD) with Ketchup costing another 0.6 EUR (5.4 HKD), and toilet another 0.5 EUR (4.5 HKD). Not a good idea to eat fast food.

TRANSPORT

There are five main transport that you might use in the Netherlands, namely train, tram, metro, bus and bike.

Train

Train (NS) is the only transport to get you across different cities in the Netherlands. It is reliable and comfortable in general compared to other trains in Europe, and delays are not severe. Yet, prices might be expensive if you go far, for instance, if you go from Rotterdam to Maastricht, one way ticket might cost you more than 20 EUR (180 HKD). Thus, you should consider buying cheaper bundles from NS to save your pocket (link below).

Classification of trains include Sprinter (slower and short distance); Intercity / International Intercity (Long distance) & Intercity direct (From Rotterdam to Amsterdam & Schiphol Airport). **Please note that a supplement of 2.5 EUR has to be paid for intercity direct or you might be fined.**

Tram

Tram is a good transport connecting the school, city center and Rotterdam Centraal. Take tram number 7 to connect between school and station; and 21 and 24 to connect between school, city center and station.

Metro

Metro is an alternative transport which goes in a more frequent service than tram does. To go to the school, you can stop at Kralingse Zoom station. For city center, Beurs/ Blaak; and station at Rotterdam Centraal.

Bus

Bus is a less used transport. It will be used when you want to go back to school at late night (after 1am when all other options are closed), and when you need to go to Rotterdam The Hague Airport (take metro and change to bus)

Bike

If you did not notice, bike is the national transport of the people in the Netherlands. They bike even when the wind is so poor and the ground is frozen. So don't be surprised.

OV Chipkaart

The octopus card in the Netherlands. Make sure you buy one for 7 EUR once you land in Amsterdam. Tram, Metro or Bus ticket will be more expensive without an OV Chipkaart. Also, you need to have 4 EUR in your card for tram, metro and bus travels, and 20 EUR for train travel. You cannot get on if you don't have enough money.

Tram and metro generally costs 1.5 to 2 EUR per trip. They charge 0.8 EUR for boarding fee, and 0.2 extra for every km. Take the same type of transport within 35 minutes saves the boarding fee. For instance, if you tap out at Beurs for quick shopping and take the tram back, you can save 0.8 EUR.

You can refund the leftover amount at big stations before you leave (but not the 7 EUR cost).

COMMUNICATION

You can sign up for Lebara or Vodafone phone plans, which costs around 10 EUR for 1 GB of data per month with more than enough call minutes.

CLIMATE

The Netherlands is very windy all year around, with very frequent rain. Umbrella is useless here as umbrella will be blown away or will break under the strong wind. Bring yourself a raincoat instead.

EXPENSES

In HKD (1 EUR = 9.0 HKD; 1 GBP = 10.0 HKD; 1 CHF = 8.0 HKD)

Visa: 2,853

Housing Registration Fees: 1,440

Housing: $4716 \times 4.5 = 21,222$

Air ticket (HKG-AMS; LHR-HKG; CX): 7,100

Mandatory Orientation: 720

Daily expenses (Transport, Food & others): 10,000

Travel (~30 countries): 37,385

Total: 80,720



Enjoy your exchange!

Please contact SBM for my contact details if necessary ☺